

riage is in itself a wrong thing; for a ceremony cannot wash away the sin of incest; and in any case experience shows that, as among the working classes, when they disperse, the wife's sister is not the woman whom the widower would most naturally call in to take charge of children and home. The cases that can be shown of concubinage between men and their sisters-in-law are only a small percentage of that vast mass of concubinage, incestuous and otherwise, which is so great a national sin; and the argument, to be worth anything, must be pushed to the abolition of almost all prohibited degrees, and the reduction of marriage, as in Prussia and New England, to a merely temporary alliance, so that no man may have an excuse for not being able by law to call the woman with whom he is happening to live for the moment his wife.

Thirdly, *Legally*. We have under the head of 'religiously,' explained the principle on which the English law of prohibited degrees is based; we must here briefly notice a very common and shameless misrepresentation to which the leading advocates of the change do not blush to have recourse. Their story is, that, before the passing of Lord Lyndhurst's Marriage Act of 1835, marriages with a wife's sister were lawful. This is an audacious misrepresentation.

Lord Lyndhurst's Act made no difference in the table of prohibited degrees. All that it did was to make it more easy than before to detect and annul unlawful marriages. Up to the passing of Lord Lyndhurst's Act marriages within the prohibited degrees were what lawyers call 'voidable.' That is, though they were unlawful, yet the unlawfulness had to be proved during the lifetime of both parties, while, if this proceeding were neglected, no proof could be offered after death of the man or the woman. The trick resorted to was to set up a collusive suit, which was kept simmering till one or other of the couple died, so as to shut out any other real one. Thus a man might marry his nearest of kin, and by keeping up a collusive suit he might have prevented the horrible union from being voided. All that Lord Lyndhurst's Act did was to put a stop to this great scandal by declaring all such marriages 'void' for the future, so that they could be attacked whether the offending couple were still alive or not.

Fourthly, *Historically*. One fact is enough to state. It is a matter of absolute historical certainty that as a rule these marriages have never been tolerated in any of the Christian communities of the east, the first dispensation for one of them in the west, dates from that most unhappy epoch in church history, the beginning of the fifteenth century. At first dispensations were given with extreme rarity to please princes and great men.

The recent Parliamentary history of the measure has been as much falsified by its advocates as every other incident connected with it. The facts, in the briefest compass, are that whenever it has cropped up in the House of Lords it has been defeated, while by looking back for sixteen years to the division lists of the House of Commons we find that it was defeated in the Parliament of 1865, that it passed in the Parliament of 1868, and that it was again defeated in the Parliament of 1874. Meanwhile the people of England sat on silent and apathetic, and let the anonymous society waste itself on fustian declamations over the protracted vexations of its manifold rebuffs.

Fifthly, *Practically*. The proposed change is shamelessly inconsistent and selfish. It claims that the man who covets his wife's sister may marry her; it forbids the woman who is in love with her husband's brother to marry him. Yet these two degrees of affinity are absolutely identical. Nay, more, while it allows the man to marry his wife's sister, it says he shall not marry his wife's sister's daughter, although she is a woman who stands a degree further off in affinity. As the Bill was originally brought into Parliament it in-

cluded the wife's niece; but the wire-pullers found that the people whose game they were playing happened not to be in love with their wives' nieces, so they lightened the ship of ballast and threw the poor niece overboard.

They pretend to be shocked when anyone asks them what they mean to do with the brothers' widow or the wife's niece, and they protest that they will resist any further relaxation. This is a ridiculous pretence, as may be seen by looking round at the condition of the marriage law in the various countries of Europe.

Alike in Protestant and in Roman Catholic countries:—

First, Wherever, either by general law, as virtually in France and formally in Protestant countries, or by way of an exception, as in other Roman Catholic lands, a man can marry his wife's sister, there always he can equally marry his brother's widow, and his wife's niece.

Secondly, Wherever, either by general law, or by way of an exception, a man can marry his sister-in-law or his niece-in-law, there also under the same conditions a man can marry his blood niece, daughter of his brother or of his sister; and he can also marry his blood aunt, sister of his father or sister of his mother. This is now the law of France and of Germany, and of nearly all the Continent.

There is no possible halting or looking back. Our present marriage law is consistent, and based on Scripture. The permission to marry a wife's sister being granted, coupled with the table of prohibited degrees being kept otherwise as it is, would be revolting to all men of logical minds from its inconsistency, its selfishness, and its contradiction to all natural justice, and nothing could prevent its being replaced by another law as consistent as the present one while differing from it, in rejecting instead of respecting Scripture—the present law, we mean, of Continental marriage. Let Parliament allow a man to join himself to his wife's sister, then it will be but a matter of a brief time before Parliament will have to allow him to marry his mother's sister, perhaps her twin sister—the counterpart, it may be, in mind, in voice, in look, in person of her who bore him.

A. J. B. BERESFORD HOPE.

### THE CHURCH AND THE COLONIES.

BY THE LORD BISHOP OF BRISBANE.

[A Sermon Preached in St. Paul's Cathedral on Sunday Evening, the 20th May, being Whitsun Day, 1888.]

"Hearken, O daughter, and consider, incline thine ear; forget also thine own people and thy father's house. So shall the king have pleasure in thy beauty. Instead of thy fathers thou shalt have children whom thou mayest make prince in all lands."—Ps. xlix. 11, 12, 16.

TO-DAY, my brethren, is a birthday, the birthday of the Christian Church; for do we not this day commemorate the outpouring of the Pentecostal gift, which is the informing power of the Church, the bond of the union of saints? It can have escaped but few of you that the order of the Articles of our belief is not fortuitous, but designed, and full of meaning, and that the confession of our faith in the HOLY GHOST, the LORD and LIFE-GIVER, only leads our thoughts to the sphere of His operation. "The Church Universal," "The Church throughout all the world"—as the Church is in various languages described—the Church indwelt by the HOLY GHOST. Who, as our Catechism teaches us, "sanctified me and all the elect people of God," such is to-day our

theme. It was when the Day of Pentecost was now come, and the disciples were all together in one place, that this Divine society was, according to the Founder's most true promise, sent forth into the world, commissioned for her special work, with this as the law of her being, the condition of her life: "Ye shall be witnesses unto Me." But, in another light, to-day is not only a birthday, but a betrothal day; and the words which I have read to you from the forty-fifth Psalm are the marriage song—in their first intention, the nuptial ode probably of a Tyrian princess. May we not individually read into them a deeper meaning, and allow them to echo into our ears a deeper and a more suggestive teaching—so they speak to us of nothing less than the mystical union betwixt CHRIST and His Church? The Bride of His choice, in her self-forgetfulness, in her entire absorption into His purposes, in the absolute identification of herself with the will of the Divine Bridegroom—was she to prove herself worthy of her high espousals? "Incline thine ear; forget also thine own people and thy father's house; so shall the king have pleasure in thy beauty." And this, too, was to be the condition of her promised fruitfulness: "Instead of thy fathers, thou shalt have children whom thou mayest make princes in all lands." And had He not set her the inspiring example of His own life of sacrifice for her?

From Heaven He came and sought her,  
To be His holy bride;  
With His own blood He bought her,  
And for her life He died.

Do not the words of the text express the very principle of His own Incarnation, the very law of His own life and death? In the words of the child's hymn:

He left His Father's glory,  
And the golden halls above;  
And took our human nature,  
In the greatness of His love.

As St. Paul expresses it: "He emptied Himself of the glory which He had with the Father before the world was, taking upon Him the form of a servant, and being made in the likeness of men, and being formed in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross," and thus imaging on earth the Divine life, the perfect obedience. In Him the Father was well pleased; the King had pleasure in His beauty,—the moral beauty of perfect goodness, the obedience unto death. For we do well to note that, as a moral Being, God can be pleased only by a moral act, a reflection of His own perfection. So speaks an ancient writer: "It was not the death of Christ that was pleasing to God, but His Will in voluntarily dying"; and what is that but an echo of St. Paul's own words: "As by one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the obedience of the One shall the many be made righteous"? Thus by the fruitfulness of His death, by the fructifying, fertilizing power of that perfect sacrifice, He wins to Himself souls new-born; lifted up from the earth He draws all men unto Him; lifted up even upon the cross, but now far above to the throne of the eternal FATHER, He still draws all mankind to the witness of the Spirit abiding in the Church and witnessing to the power of CHRIST crucified; for, like the moon, the faithful witness in Heaven, the Church is called to reflect on earth the light of the sun of her righteousness. Her commission is to illustrate, to exemplify, His life. This note of sacrifice is to be her characteristic: "Forget also thine own people and thy FATHER'S house; so shall the King have pleasure in thy beauty." Thus the law of her life is declared. She is a missionary Church, or she fails in that which is vital, that which is essential to her life. Constantly aggressive, constantly spreading forth into fresh fields, till the knowledge of the LORD, with which she is charged, cover the earth as the waters cover